

# Ladywood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105274
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308815
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Emerson

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	61
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Pam Livesey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sally McFarlane
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Masefield Road Little Lever Bolton Lancashire BL3 1NG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 333400
<b>Fax number</b>	01204 333405

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a special school for pupils with complex learning difficulties. Almost half the pupils have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and many pupils have moderate or severe learning difficulties. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of White British origin with a small minority from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The school holds a number of awards including the Healthy Schools award, the Inclusion Kitemark, the Investors in People award and Leading Aspect awards for parental involvement, inclusion and ASD provision. The school shares the same site with a mainstream primary school. Since January 2008 it has offered an outreach service to local mainstream primary schools.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils make extremely good progress. Pupils' standards are very low in comparison to those found in mainstream schools, however their achievement is excellent. Children in the Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 and 2 make very good progress in learning how to communicate and in developing the important skills that underpin learning such as listening and being attentive. As they move further up the school, pupils' progress accelerates, with pupils in Years 3 to 6 making outstanding progress. As a result, many pupils exceed the challenging targets set for them. Teaching and learning are excellent because staff have a very good understanding of pupils' individual needs. Work is set at just the right level and the quality of support is outstanding. This means that all pupils are fully included in lessons and respond very well to the lively and well planned activities. The classes for pupils with ASD are very well adapted to provide a highly structured and low distraction environment. Consequently, pupils feel secure and respond well. In these classes teachers are effectively supported by the specialist speech and language therapists, as a result communication skills are promoted particularly well. Visual aids, such as symbols, are used very skillfully to help pupils to communicate. However, the school acknowledges that strategies to support pupils' with autistic spectrum disorder, with writing and recording could be extended even further. Pupils' work is always marked with positive feedback to encourage them to try hard. In their marking, teachers note exactly how much support each pupil needed to complete the work. This provides an accurate record of how well pupils are doing.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding and underpins pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. Staff know the pupils very well and relationships are excellent. Consequently, pupils are extremely positive about all aspects of school life. They try very hard in lessons and behave well. Pupils make very good progress in learning how to make choices to keep themselves safe and healthy. This is recognised by the Healthy Schools award which the school holds. The emphasis on developing key skills such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) along with the focus on communication and personal and social skills prepares the pupils very well for adult life. Pupils make a real contribution to the community through recycling and fundraising. They enjoy taking responsibility such as helping out with the school council's snack trolley.

Parents are extremely positive about the school. They praise the caring attitude of staff and the excellent support their children are given. 'At all times the interests of our children are paramount' is a view that typifies that of many parents. Monitoring and evaluation are good. Pupils are assessed regularly and their progress is carefully tracked. The individual records of achievement are of very high quality and demonstrate clearly the progress pupils make. The school sets challenging targets both for individual pupils and for the school as a whole. These targets are met and often exceeded. The headteacher provides extremely strong leadership and is aspirational for the future of the school. She is ably supported by the leadership team and by the subject leaders. Governors are experienced and supportive. They challenge the school well. The school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection and has adapted very well to the substantial growth in the number of pupils with ASD. It provides excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

As a consequence of the children's significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards are very low on entry to the school. Children in the Reception year have a good start to their education and achievement is good. Teaching and learning are very good. Very good teamwork and excellent support enables children to settle very well. They learn to respond to classroom routines and make good progress in developing early skills in numeracy and literacy. Children are thoroughly assessed on entry to the school and the assessments are regularly updated. Children's individual records demonstrate the strong progress they make in learning to communicate and in developing personal and social skills. Consequently, they have a very good basis for learning and are very well prepared to get the most out of lessons. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop alternative ways for pupils with ASD, who find independent writing difficult, to record their ideas.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards are well below those found nationally, but this represents excellent progress overall considering pupils' skills when they start school. The quality of assessment and the systems to track pupils' progress have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Information gained from assessment demonstrates clearly that children in the Reception year and pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. From Year 3 pupils' progress accelerates. By Year 6 achievement is excellent in English, mathematics, science and ICT. In 2007, for example, around a third of Year 6 pupils achieved Level 2 or above in English, mathematics and science. The achievement of pupils in the specialist classes for ASD and that of the small number of girls and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is just as good as the other pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and they generally try their very best in lessons. Any challenging behaviour is dealt with very skillfully so that lessons are not disrupted. The number of exclusions is very low. Pupils have very good opportunities to take responsibilities. The school council is active and makes a strong contribution to the school community. The pupils are proud that they are helping to improve the school through projects such as the initiative to clean the school pond. Pupils make excellent progress in learning social skills. They respond very well to the comprehensive programmes to teach them how to stay healthy and safe. The excellent emphasis on developing independence skills in conjunction with the focus on helping pupils to communicate prepares them very well to succeed in the community. Attendance is very good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teachers and support staff work extremely well together and this very strong teamwork ensures that pupils are given excellent one-to-one support. Consequently, all pupils are fully included in lessons and learn very well. Lessons are lively and are very well adapted to meet the particular needs of different groups of pupils. Work set is based on accurate assessment and is very well matched to the learning level of individual pupils. Pupils with additional difficulties are very well supported by teachers and the specialist speech and language therapists who are based in the school. This means that the needs of pupils with ASD are very well met and these pupils make very good progress in developing their communication skills. However, the school recognises the need to develop the range of strategies to help these pupils record their ideas even further.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is very well adapted to meet the particular needs of all the learners. There is a good balance between teaching key skills such as literacy, developing social and independence skills and enlivening the curriculum with enrichment and sporting activities. The excellence of the curriculum is demonstrated by the awards which the school holds, such as the Leading Aspect Award for ASD provision. A real strength of the curriculum is the excellent opportunities for inclusion, both within the school and through links with other primary schools. For example, the choir is made up of pupils from Ladywood and the school that shares the same site. The school organises a good variety of clubs, which are popular with the pupils and well attended. The curriculum is broadened and enriched through a variety of visits to the local community, by visitors such as children's authors and through exciting activities such as residential trips. This supports pupils' personal and social development very well.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Excellent links with outside agencies, including health personnel and therapists, and with parents ensure that pupils' individual needs are extremely well met. All procedures for child protection, the safe recruitment of staff, health, safety and risk assessment are in place. Behaviour plans are of high quality and adhered to consistently by all staff. Individual education plans are comprehensive with clear and detailed targets. Younger pupils understand what they have to do to improve their social and communication skills. They know, for example, that they have to use visual symbols or speech to gain a snack of their choice. Older pupils know what their targets are for learning and behaviour and how well they are doing to achieve them. Staff are very skilled at praising pupils accurately for good behaviour such as 'good sitting'. This supports the pupils' personal and social development extremely well.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, provides outstanding leadership for the school. The subject leaders with additional responsibilities for literacy and numeracy provide very good role models for other teachers and are developing the subjects well. There are very good lines of communication between all leaders and the governors. Monitoring is effective and the senior leadership team has an accurate view of how well the school is doing even though it has been too modest when evaluating its performance. The school improvement plan is a very useful tool to move the school forward. The challenging targets the school sets for itself are regularly reviewed and consistently achieved or exceeded. The school continually strives to develop its role further as is evident through the establishment of a successful outreach service and a variety of extended provisions. Governors are experienced and challenge the school well. They have been proactive in improving the school, by for example, encouraging the development of provision for pupils with ASD.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Ladywood School, Bolton, BL3 1NG

I know that some of you find reading difficult, so your teachers will tell you about this letter. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. I really enjoyed finding out about the things you are doing and talking to you. It was very useful to know what you think about your school.

Your parents and carers think you go to an excellent school and I agree with them. There are many things that are really outstanding in your school. These include:

- The excellent care and support which you are given so that you feel safe
- The really good opportunities you have to work with children in mainstream primary schools
- The very good progress which you make in learning to communicate and interact with other people
- The exceptionally good teaching which enables you to learn masses in lessons and to achieve extremely well.

All of this is possible because all the staff do a fantastic job and try their very best to make the school as good as they can for you.

I have asked your teachers to improve one thing to make your school even better. This is:

- To give those of you who don't like writing or find writing difficult other ways of recording your ideas.

I hope you carry on enjoying what you are doing and continue to help your teachers all you can.